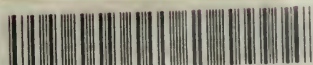


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PARLIAMENTARY VS. PARTY GOVERNMENT.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY,
OCTOBER 16th, 1891, BY CHANCELLOR FLEMING.

At the beginning of the session, when our professors have returned from their well earned holiday and students are again present from all sections of the Dominion, it will not be considered ill-timed or inappropriate that on our re-assembly I should say a few words on a subject of common concern to every individual in the community and to none more than to those connected with educational institutions.

The matter which I take upon myself to bring to your notice involves the consideration of an evil to which it is impossible to shut our eyes, and in the removal of which every honest minded person is directly interested; and this fact will I am sure be accepted as my reason for dealing with it specifically. Wherever there is a public evil, there is a public wrong to be righted; and it becomes a duty, which we owe to the community, to apply our utmost intelligence to discover the proper remedy, and act with energy in its application. The theme of my address is *Party Government* versus *Parliamentary Government*.

At the recent prolonged meeting of parliament at Ottawa, there was brought to light a series of transactions, which have given a shock to the moral sense of many of our people. These revelations will little surprise those who are familiar with public affairs in the United States.

I believe I am correct in saying, that in Canada we have not reached the length which our neighbours have attained in what passes by the name of "politics." Methods and practices have, however, been introduced into our public life, in some respects the same as theirs, and if our system has not yet reached the same development we may reasonably expect that if we continue on the path which they have

followed and which we have entered upon, we shall in course of no long time arrive at the same goal.

In a work recently issued from the press, "Bryce's American Commonwealth," there are twenty-three chapters devoted exclusively to the subject of government by party, and many of the other chapters have a bearing on the same matter. Within the pages of this valuable and instructive work we find a full and detailed account of the party system which prevails among our neighbours. The author describes at length the business of the politician, the machinery of parties, how it works and what it effects. He reveals the fact that the machinery has many and costly ramifications, and that a great deal of money is required to keep it in motion. Where the money comes from is another question. He points out that "the politicians themselves belong to, or emerge from a needy class" and the funds generally must come from other sources than the pockets of the men most actively engaged, but from whatever source money may in the first place be obtained, the startling conclusion is irresistibly reached that "the whole cost in the long run is thrown on the public."

At the first glance it is not easy to see that this conclusion can apply to the party out of power and in no position to help themselves. The author, however, explains that its members live on hope; they hope that they will eventually succeed in overthrowing their opponents and are buoyed up with the belief that the minority of to-day will be the majority of to-morrow. He points out that as a fund must be raised meanwhile to carry on the struggle, the vassals of the party are assessed and subscriptions levied on manufacturers, contractors, office seekers and expectants generally. Thus,

claims are established on the spoils which sooner or later will come under the control of the party. When the victorious day arrives, the expectants do not as a rule allow their claims to be forgotten.

One thing clearly brought out by the author is, that enormous sums are expended by each party contending for the mastery. Those, engaged in the conflict, maintain journals, employ writers, speakers, canvassers and agitators; in fact an army of professional politicians finds employment in this kind of warfare. The necessity of a party fund is apparent. If money is the root of all evil, it is likewise the main-spring of party activity; the greater the activity, the larger the demand on the purses of those who have something to give, or something to expect.

Party organizations on both sides are on an elaborate scale, and nothing is left undone by each contestant to advance party interest. It is civil war on a gigantic scale. There are hostile camps everywhere. The nation is formed into two divisions, each division contending and struggling for the supremacy. The rank and file are drilled by the professional politicians, who manage the nominations, dictate who are to be the candidates, and generally direct the contest so as to carry the elections. The party managers are, for the most part, men who make politics the sole, or chief business of their lives, and who live and flourish by the occupation. The list, not seldom, includes ministers of state, or those who expect to be ministers, members of congress, or those who expect to be members; it also comprises those, who make the party to which they are attached a stepping stone to power and place; and who if they do not at once attain their ends, are rewarded meanwhile if in no other way by the excitement which is stimulated by contest.

The fullest and most painstaking enquiry into the whole system leads the author to describe the general result in the following words: "The tremendous power of party organization has been described. It enslaves local officials, it increases the tendency to regard members of congress as mere delegates, it keeps men of independent character out of local and national politics, it puts bad men into place, it perverts the wishes of the

"people, it has in some places set up a tyranny under the form of democracy."

This conclusion arrived at by the latest independent authority is not disputed in any quarter. It is supported by every writer of any note. Albert Stickney in "Democratic Government," 1885, says: "The practical result of the present political system in the United States, which at first sight seems in form so thoroughly democratic, has been to develop the most ingenious and remarkable tyranny known in all political history. * * The political life of the nation is a never-ending struggle for political power between rival factions—all of them brought into existence by the same cause, obeying the same laws, using the same methods, compelled, whether they wish to or not, to prostitute the power of public office to personal ends. The result is a new kind of tyranny—the tyranny of the election machine. Under this system political freedom for the citizen cannot exist."

Henry George in "Social Problems," 1890, writes: "Speaking generally of the whole country from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the lakes to the gulf, our government by the people has in large degree become, is in larger degree becoming, government by the strong and unscrupulous. * * Money and organization tell more and more in elections. In some sections bribery has become chronic, and numbers of voters expect regularly to sell their votes. In some sections large employers regularly bulldoze their hands into voting as they like. In Municipal, State and Federal politics the power of the "machine" is increasing. In many places it has become so strong that the ordinary citizen has no more influence on the government under which he lives than he would have in China. He is, in reality, not one of the governing classes but one of the governed. * * And he is beginning to accept the situation and leave politics to politicians, as something with which an honest, self-respecting man cannot afford to meddle. * * The type of the rising party leader is not the orator or statesman of an earlier day, but the shrewd manager who knows how to handle the "workers," how to combine pecuniary interests, how to obtain money and how to spend it." The same writer in another place referring to the party organization, says: "Its

“members carry wards in their pockets, make up the slates for nominating conventions, distribute offices as they bargain together, and—though they toil not neither do they spin—wear the best of raiment and spend money lavishly. And who are these men? The wise, the good, the learned; men who have earned the confidence of their fellow-citizens by the purity of their lives, the splendour of their talents, their probity of public trust, their deep study of the problems of government? No; they are gamblers, saloon keepers, pugilists, or worse, who have made a trade of controlling votes and of buying and selling offices.”

An equally well-known writer, Dr. Goldwin Smith, remarks: “A national conflict every four years for the Presidency, and the enormous patronage that is now annexed to it, must bring everything that is bad to the top, and will end in the domination of scoundrels. The moral atmosphere is darkened with calumny, bribery and corruption and all their fatal effects upon national character. How can the political character of any nation withstand forever the virus of evil passion and corruption which these vast faction fights infuse.”

We have thus described to us the character of the machinery which controls political affairs in the republic. Writers generally affirm that public life has become so foul that the best men and the finest intellects take no part in the business of the nation; that these have been driven off the field and politics have now to a large extent become a prey to unprincipled plunderers.

It is well to know something about the road we are travelling, and I read these extracts so that we may understand whither we are going and what is before us if we continue as we have commenced. So long as we travel smoothly and pleasantly we do not think of making enquiries concerning the way. But when we come to “bad spots,” then we ask the next traveller we meet the condition of the road before us. That is exactly our case in political affairs. We have stumbled on a stretch of rough ground; we enquire the character of the way we have to pass over, and those familiar with it tell us, that it becomes worse and worse, terminating in a quagmire. With this information, unless we are fatuously blind and

criminally indifferent to our fate, we call a halt and consider as to the attempt we should make to find a better route.

The political path followed in the United States is “partyism,” and we plainly see where it has landed our neighbours. In Canada we have not yet travelled so far, but if anything be wanting to show that we are hurrying on in the same direction, let me read a few sentences from a good authority, the *Halifax Herald*, the chief organ of one of the parties in Nova Scotia. Within the last few days (Oct. 12), that newspaper, in a leading article, expressed these opinions: “Those who are acquainted with the political methods of either party might, we presume, furnish the public with an interesting experience of the use and abuse of campaign funds. * * Party government is an institution in itself, recognized under the political constitution of the country. The organization of a party, its maintenance, and successful working all necessitate large financial outlay. * * The money must be raised, and those who refuse to contribute their fair share only increase the temptation ever present to the party workers to obtain funds from those who have a financial interest in the success of one party or the other. It is useless to ignore existing conditions. The struggle between rival parties will continue. Funds for political purposes must be raised. It is, therefore, the duty of all good citizens to contribute according to their means; and if they fail to do so, the political organizations of rival parties must be thrown more and more into the hands of those who contribute to their support from corrupt or selfish motives.”

I believe I am warranted in saying that in Canada partyism is not yet developed to the extent described in the United States, but recent disclosures show the tendency in public life, and it is perfectly clear that if we act on similar principles and follow the same headlong course we cannot fail to reap the same or similar evil consequences.

We know that there are good men on both sides of politics. It is not the want of men, patriotic, public-spirited and able, that we have to deplore, it is the malign influences of the system by which they are enslaved. The best men are dragged downwards by the party maelstrom, and once within its vortex they

become powerless to escape from its baleful embrace.

The low tone of public life, which we Canadians have already reached, is evidenced by the fact, that no ordinary man in his private dealings, would do that which by a singular obliquity of moral sense is considered unobjectionable in party ethics. It seems to be well understood on both sides, that dishonesty in almost any form only becomes an offence when detection follows; and if we judge our politicians as described by themselves or by the partisan press, there are few indeed of whose public or private character it is possible to form an exalted opinion.

It is not necessary to go far a field for evidence of the demoralizing tendency of the political system practised in our own land. The proceedings of the last few months clearly indicate that we have already made a most disquieting progress in our downward course. Can nothing be done to turn it in a right direction? The universal law is that there must be progress. Nothing remains stationary. If we permit the system to remain as it is, the progress will continue downwards; and the experience of our neighbors teaches us that as time rolls on we will make the descent at a greatly accelerated speed.

We may one and all ask the question what in this emergency are we to do? We do not want retrogression or degradation. We do not desire to go from bad to worse. Our object should be improvement and advancement.

If this be our aspiration there are certain things which we must not do. We must not fold our hands in despair and leave politics and political affairs wholly to the politicians. We must not close our eyes to the misdeeds which have been brought to light in our own land, or to the experience derived from the United States. The past history of politics in both countries will be of benefit to us if we only determine to profit by it. We must not listen to that school of politicians, who tell us that government by party is the only means of carrying on free institutions; that it is impossible to attain to good government without opposing parties. We must be prepared to dismiss from our minds the dogma that partyism is a necessity, however ably or by whatever number the assertion be made.

Government by party has been practised in the United States for a hundred years; in England for two centuries; in Canada it may be traced from the first year of her legislative existence. In all three countries it has been tried and found wanting. I think, I cannot be wrong in laying down the axiom, that no system, however deeply rooted by long usage, however strengthened by prejudice, if founded on evil or productive of evil, can be considered a finality.

The party system divides a nation into two halves; in itself an evil. It is based on principles which nurture some of the worst passions of our nature. It is productive, as everyone must admit, of intolerable evils; and on every ground we are warranted in the conclusion, that this system should not be held as sacred, or unassailable and unalterable.

If that much be conceded to us, we may venture a step further and consider if it be at all possible to make a change for the better, a wise and beneficial change. It must be clear to everyone that we cannot continue in the old way, shutting our eyes to what is going on around us. Do not all the facts, all the testimony from every quarter, establish that the old way leads downwards to a lower and lower plane of political demoralization?

It is historically true, that the spirit and force of party organizations have, in past generations, been an essential, possibly in some cases, the chief factor in Government. At this day, the system is upheld by men of eminence whose opinions deserve to carry weight. There is indeed a traditional idea of wide prevalence, that the party system alone will suit a free people; and that the principles upon which it is based are essential to purity of government. Do the facts, may we ask, establish that the party system has resulted at any period of our history in purity of public life, or has it effected the opposite result? Has it been proven, that the contentions and discords and conflicts of partyism are in any way conducive to our national well-being? Is it the case that subjection to traditional party spirit is indispensable to our freedom?

Let every thoughtful man, whatever his predilections, consider these questions carefully and dispassionately, and it will become more and more clear to him, that the party system of government, which we have inherited

as the accompaniment of representative institutions, is no longer a necessity; that its usefulness has come to an end, that it has in its latest development grown to be a positive evil; and that it should now be replaced by another system better adapted to the improved intelligence and altered circumstances of the age.

Within the present century, scientific methods have made conquests over traditional methods in nearly every sphere of life. In agriculture, in commerce and in mechanical art the traditional spirit has disappeared, and given place to the scientific spirit. We find that in spinning, weaving, printing, lighting, heating, telegraphing, travelling by land and sea, and in nearly every human engagement we can name, the scientific method has irrevocably superseded traditional methods. Is the great question we are now discussing to prove an exception? Is the art of government to remain outside the pale of progress? Surely parliamentary development has not reached its ultimate stage, and public affairs for ever must be administered according to the principles of the prize ring. Heaven forbid! Can we not discern some small glimmerings of light, following perhaps the deepest darkness preceding the dawn? Is it not the case that in modern times the power of tradition has been weakened and that its authority is steadily declining? May we not, therefore, cherish the hope that it may be dethroned in political life; that we shall not always remain victims of a superstitious belief in the system of government by party; and that this fair land shall not forever be the battlefield of gregarious politicians? What this young nation wants is not endless political conflict with all its accompanying evils, but settled rest and peace.

Our people essentially democratic, and attached to representative institutions, will bear in mind that parliamentary government and party government are not identical, indeed, that they are totally distinct. True they have been so long associated, that they have come to be considered inseparable, but reflection will make it clear to us that the connection, even if it be historical, is accidental, and that it is an erroneous popular notion, that a connection between them is a necessary consequence.

The tendency of events suggests that im-

portant changes must eventually be made in the structure of parliament itself. Such changes are needed in the direction of unity, simplicity and strength. Our parliament is supposed to represent the nation; but as at present constituted it practically comprises but the representatives of two parties. The theory of parliament is an assembly of persons chosen by the whole body of electors with supreme authority to speak and act for the nation. The ideal parliament is the nation in essence, but the system followed in the election of members utterly fails to attain this desired end. Under the party systems it is absolutely impracticable to attain even an approximation to the ideal parliament. It is true that parliament, formed by means of the existing system, assumes the functions of a perfectly constituted national assembly; but its members represent only a part of the nation, and those who support the administration of the day, and keep it in power, form a still smaller representative part. Take for example the parliament formed after the general election of 1887. The government had on this occasion the largest support given to any administration since Canada became a Dominion; and yet, including every vote polled for government candidates who were defeated at the elections, the supporters of the administration represented only 39 per cent. of the whole body of electors. The opposition members represented 37 per cent. of the whole, counting also the votes polled for the defeated candidates on their side. Thus it becomes perfectly obvious, that a large majority of the people, whatever party may rule, has no part whatever through representatives, in the administration of public affairs. In the case referred to, 61 per cent. of the whole body of electors had no share in the government of the country. The administration was supported by the representatives of 39 per cent. and it was opposed by those of 37 per cent. in every measure carried in the house by a party vote; leaving as a net balance, the representatives of only two per cent. of the electors to determine legislation, to settle the policy of the government, and to speak and act for the nation with the whole weight and supreme authority of parliament. I have presented no extreme case. If we take the results of the recent general elections (1891), it

will be found that the number of votes cast for government candidates was only 33 per cent. of the electors, and the government net majority in the house represents but one-and-a-half per cent. of the total number of voters on the list. As a matter of fact, the system of government by party enables a minority, frequently a small minority, to seize and hold control of the affairs of state, and award to its friends office, power and patronage with every one of the prizes of party victory. All outside the lines of the successful party are systematically ignored. Do not the facts prove that party government is opposed to the true theory of parliamentary government? Is it surprising that in working out the party system the struggle becomes so fierce, and that ways and means are resorted to, which shock the sensibility of even party men when they come to be exposed to the light of day?

What is the remedy for the state of things which now prevails? It is not far to seek, and it involves no great constitutional change. We have simply to obey the law of perpetual evolution so that our parliament may become freer and better than it ever has been. We have only to free it from the trammels of party and obtain an assembly which will represent the people in fact as well as in name. Hitherto we have had the shadow, now let us have the substance. In all previous parliaments a part only of the electors, and not necessarily the best part, has been represented. Why should any portion be excluded? Should not the supreme national assembly command the confidence and reverence of the whole people? To obtain their confidence and reverence it is obvious that our parliament should represent the whole, and consist as far as possible of the wisest and best men the entire nation has to offer.

This is the true conception of a parliament for a democratic people such as we are, and we must seek to obtain such a parliament if we wish to escape from the evils which at present beset us. Denouncing the politicians for the inevitable consequences of a bad system, as some of our people do, is an easy matter; but it is folly to suppose that this alone will bring any permanent remedy. Politicians are human as we are, and they become precisely what the people make them, or allow

them to make themselves. If the people so will, and take the proper course to effect their purpose, the school of politicians which flourishes to-day will disappear.

Having the clearest evidence that we have never had and never can have a perfectly constituted parliament under existing political usages; having the best grounds for the belief that the system which prevails is hastening us to a condition of political subjection, to an oligarchy of the worst kind, such as we find in the United States; being satisfied on these points, every good citizen must feel the responsibility resting upon him that he should do his utmost to avert such a national calamity.

The first important step is to take means to have a perfectly constituted parliament. In Canada we have accepted the great fundamental principle that "the people is the source of all law and all power," we must therefore strive to constitute our parliament so that it will represent not a part, as now, but the whole nation. This step cannot be taken without effecting other changes which would tend to the common welfare; the chief of which would be that a new complexion would be given to the government. We would no longer have a party government; the executive would proceed from the national assembly and thus would be the veritable focal point of the whole nation. The best and wisest members returned by the people could be chosen by parliament from its own members to sit at the same council board to guard public interests, administer the laws, and speak and act for the nation.

In a paper published in Volume VII of the Royal Society proceedings under the heading "A problem in political science," I have endeavored to show that by the scientific adjustment of votes and the application of sound principles, the true parliament could be constituted. I cannot here enter into any extended explanation of the proposition. I must content myself with the statement, that in my judgment it is perfectly practicable by the proposed plan, even if no better can be devised, to extend to every elector full and equal representation, thus removing the anomalies I have pointed out.

The details of the machinery cannot here be discussed. Indeed, it would be premature to

deal with details in advance of principles; but the machinery may be of the simplest character, and being entirely national the cost would be made a direct charge on the state, as the cost of taking the census or of any other public service is borne by the public exchequer. The practical working of the system would be conducted by public officials, specially appointed and held responsible for the proper performance of their duties in the manner of other public officials. The cost of the proposed system of choosing representatives might be considerable; but it would fall far short of the cost of the present system, when the expenditure under two party organizations and every accessory charge are taken into account. Moreover, the whole would be open and above suspicion, and there would be no room for improper practices. Whatever the cost, it would render party organization nugatory, and the gain to the public would be incalculable. Legislation would certainly be greatly simplified. The sessions of parliament would no longer be prolonged through the interminable and profitless discussions which proceed from party strife. There would be great economy of time and money; but however great this economy, it would be of small moment compared with the more important benefits which would result generally from the overthrow of a pernicious system, entirely out of joint with the march of events.

Partyism has an historical origin. It was born in troublesome times, when the spirit of antagonism between classes was general, and when the masses of people were in a ruder condition than they now are. As the ages succeed each other, the spirit of humanity changes with the advance of civilization. We have long passed out of the age of fierce and cruel persecutions. We have left behind us the spirit of conflict and destruction, and have entered the marvellous period of construction and production. Our lives are now more happily passed in the peaceful era of human justice and human reason. If we have left behind the belligerent ages, would it be in advance of our time to abandon political methods in civil life, which keep alive the spirit of conflict and maintain usages which are opposed to true progress? In intelligent communities at the present day partyism can be viewed only as an anachronism.

Consider for a moment the consequence if

partyism were introduced into modern commercial life. Take a bank, an insurance company or any large business concern. Introduce the principle of partyism into the management, what would follow? We should in each case have a house divided against itself, and how long would it stand?

Suppose the directors of a railway company were divided, as parties are ranged in parliament. The persistent endeavour of one portion of the board would be directed to keeping the trains in motion; while the other portion as persistently would do their utmost to throw obstacles in the way. Would the public reap any advantage from the antagonism? Would the shareholders receive dividends?

Take this university. How long would it prosper, how long would it maintain its ground and be useful to the community, if partyism gained a footing so as to cause continual contentions and strife among the trustees, or the senate, or the council.

Consider the consequences if partyism were allowed to enter into the proceedings of the great annual assemblies of the several religious denominations. Would it be justifiable on any ground? Would any one of these important bodies perform its functions so speedily and so well? Each one of these great gatherings partakes of the character of parliament, and might with advantage in some respects be imitated. An enormous amount of business is brought before them, and ordinarily they do more in one week than they could in ten weeks if party tactics, such as are displayed at Ottawa, prevailed.

Take a much humbler illustration. Take an ordinary row boat, allow the crew to fight among themselves, or suppose the rowers determined to pull in opposite directions. It is needless to say there would be much agitation of the water, but little or no satisfactory progress.

These several illustrations will bring out the well established fact, that to the extent that conflict is provoked, satisfactory results are lessened; and that under all ordinary circumstances, conflict is a wasteful expenditure of force. This rule must apply to political and national affairs as to everything else; and viewing the question before us from all points, we are led to the conclusion that there is no logical justification for partyism in this age.

In order to supersede partyism, it is not at all necessary to broach any new doctrine, revolutionary in its character. In reality the opposite is the case. The desire is to maintain the institution of parliament and make it more efficient, more perfect and more stable. The design is to realize the ideal national assembly in which every elector may have an equal voice. The aim is to maintain all that is good in the parliamentary system of government, and take away all that is defective and bad; to remove the worn out vestures of the past which are ill adapted to the growth of the nineteenth century. The great primary object is to establish unity and promote amity, and thus remove far from us the desolation which proceeds from "a kingdom divided against itself."

In my humble judgment the question of parliamentary representation is capable of scientific treatment, and it is safe to say that if so treated, partyism, as it now exists, with its baneful influences and demoralizing effects, would irrevocably be swept away. There are few questions which more deeply affect society and civilization. In the heat of party warfare it cannot be discussed fruitfully, and it is only in the intervals between conflicts, or under conditions removed from the struggle that calm reflection will avail. This question is the great problem of to-day; it has the strongest possible claim on the attention of every well-wisher of his country who has the qualifications to consider it carefully and dispassionately. I fear it has small chance of being so considered by those who place party triumph higher than country, or who regard fealty to party more binding than the laws of the decalogue. Such men are wanting in intellectual freedom to approach this subject appreciatively. Even those whose relations with political organizations are not close, so far as they are partisans are they wanting in the qualifications necessary to take a disinterested view of it? There are many men with whom party advancement and success have been the ruling motives; such men will naturally have a settled unwillingness to part company with old associations and the party spirit inherent to them. They will cling with tenacity to their deeply rooted habit of thought. They will extol the advantages of party government. They will reiterate that government by party

is the only possible means of carrying on representative institutions. They will declare that the abolition of party would mean an end of all order and progress, and would prove the beginning of general desolation. Certain it is that government by party will never be reformed from within, and we may be well assured that every honest attempt to effect a change will be ridiculed as utopian or branded as a mischievous innovation. True partisans are not the men to yield without a struggle. They will never pull down their own ramparts and surrender their own citadel. The stronghold of partyism can only be sapped and mined by the slow process of public education, and eventually demolished through the common sense of the nation.

Whatever the present political condition, we may rest satisfied that the great heart of Canada is sound. We may depend upon it that so soon as the nation comes to understand the true nature of the malady, and that a remedy is possible and applicable, from that moment party government will be doomed.

There is but one cure for the disease under which we suffer. Laws may be passed to prevent scandals begotten of party exigencies; but ways will be found to elude them, let them be ever so stringent, so long as partyism exists. There is a rankling sore in the body politic. We may heal an ulcer on the surface, but the ulcer is but one of the symptoms, and so long as the deep-seated disease remains it will again break out in another spot or appear in another form. The true physician directs his attention to the source of the ailment, and by proper treatment removes the first cause of the evil and thus purifies the whole system. In this national matter in order to succeed, the same course must be followed; and whenever the mind of the nation becomes satisfied that it is the only effective means of getting rid of our political evils, then, and not till then, will partyism be dethroned.

How is the mind of the nation to be reached on this cardinal problem? The national mind is made up of many individual minds, each one of which is a minute fraction of the whole. These fractional parts must in the first place be moulded and instructed by men of rectitude, whose powers have been matured by study and observation, men who are watchful of the highest interests of the people. What

class better qualified by the nature of their calling for this noble and patriotic duty, than teachers, both lay and clerical, throughout the land. Obviously we must look mainly to the school, the college and the pulpit for the agencies to enlighten and elevate the individual mind, and, through the individual, the collective mind of the nation. We must first form private opinion, from which public opinion will slowly and surely form itself.

It may be objected that ministers of the gospel should not meddle with politics. If politics, degenerating into partyism, have become vicious and impure, so much the more is it the imperative duty of clergymen to employ every proper means to promote a sound and healthy moral tone for the benefit of the community. Is not Canada a christian land? Does not the census inform us that, with the exception of a few tribes of Pagan Indians and a few hundred Jews, we are from sea to sea all christians? On what ground then should the christian teacher be debarred from assuming all the duties of his office? Can he indeed throw off the grave responsibility which rests upon him? Can he neglect the high duty of using every opportunity to restore public life to a healthy and more upright character? Merely party issues in which no moral element is involved should be absolutely excluded from every pulpit discourse; but a great question, such as this, in which the public morality, the purity, the honour and the lasting welfare of the whole nation is involved, should be fearlessly dealt with by every clergyman in the land. The influence of the pulpit has been and always will be great, and no better or more effective means can be found of enlightening the masses and elevating public opinion to a higher level. It was written a century ago: "the true cure for darkness is the introduction of light." Who better able to introduce light than those who have obtained its possession—the wise and the learned? Who more fitted to purge politics of its evils than those whose lives have been dedicated to morality and uprightness.

In this young country it is only in harmony with nature that everything should be in a condition of healthy growth. I know of no reason why our parliamentary system should not partake of the general improvement and advancement. At Ottawa a corner of the curtain has been raised sufficiently high to admit

of our seeing evidences of fundamental defects in governmental methods, and traces of grave obstacles to our progressive well being. I ask should it not be the earnest aim of every Canadian with the true patriotic spirit to seek to eradicate these defects and remove every obstacle which retards our growth and elevation as a people.

If this be a christian country surely the entire moral code of christianity should be binding on all, and on none more than our law-makers. It is of unspeakable importance that we should find effective means to purify the fountain of legislation. It is a matter of public economy, public morality and public honour, and our hopes must rest on the three great educational factors which I have named. In this question, is involved the first and last needs of the Dominion and we must appeal to our best teachers of all creeds and in all places to set about the task of lifting politics out of partyism into a loftier and healthier atmosphere. True, there are enormous difficulties to be overcome, but the task is as noble as it is necessary and it is rendered nobler even if more difficult by the fact that we shall look in vain for a precedent, no other nation having led the way in any successful attempt to bring parliament up to its true ideal condition. The scientific movement of the nineteenth century has accomplished marvellous success, it has been crowned with peaceful victories far more wonderful and far more glorious than military conquests. If, in the new field, the calm voices of science and of reason can be heard through the din of party strife, it may be that Canada will do something to accomplish her destiny, by establishing a precedent which all nations possessing free institutions may follow.

We remember the familiar phrase "Canada first." These two short words have a strong sterling ring about them. Let Canada be the first in a movement towards a rectification of the national administration, and a recognition of happier political methods. Let the sons of Canada determine to be first in all that is good, to be in the front rank of the great family of British nations. What loftier ambition can we have than to elevate our country, and present Canada before all the nations of the earth, a bright example of vigorous, upright youth, in every respect worthy of the historic races from which we spring.

A POLITICAL PROBLEM

A PAPER READ BY CHANCELLOR FLEMING BEFORE
THE ROYAL SOCIETY.

I propose to direct attention to a scientific question within the domain of politics or civil government which appears to me to be of great interest. It presents a problem which up to the present time remains unsolved.

The institution of parliament, as we all know, is of ancient date. In England a general assembly or council of the nation has been held immemorially under various names. Before the conquest three designations were at various times assigned to it:

1. Mycel Synoth, or great synod.
2. Mycel Gemot, or great council.
3. Witenagemot, or council of the wise men.

The name of "Parliament" was not given to the National Council in England until after the Conquest, when the French language was exclusively used by the dominant class, and French became the official language of the English nation.

Parliament has greatly changed since its early days. It has grown and developed from century to century, and it may be said to be still in a condition of growth and development.

Whatever may have been the character of the meetings of the wise men before the Conquest, or of the Parliaments which followed, the central idea of parliament at the present day, is an assembly of individuals representing the whole nation. The functions of Parliament are to act on behalf of the nation as the supreme authority, and—representing the nation—it possesses every power and every right and every attribute which the nation possesses. The fundamental idea and guiding principle of Parliament is, that it embraces all the separate parts which compose the realm, and in fact it is the nation in essence.

This is the theoretical and proper idea of Parliament, but it cannot be affirmed that the ideal Parliament has ever yet been realized.

Indeed it may be held that the means taken to constitute Parliament cannot, in the nature of things, result in producing a national assembly in which every individual elector may be fairly represented and his voice heard. As a matter of fact, under the existing system, it is not practicable to have in the elective house every part of the nation represented: some parts must necessarily remain unrepresented.

Such being the case, the problem which science may be asked to solve, is simply this: *to devise the means of forming an elective assembly which practically as well as theoretically will be the nation in essence.*

What is commonly known as the "Government" or the "Administration," and how it may be constituted, form no part of the problem, but are separate questions which I do not propose to discuss. I merely submit as a general principle, that the Government may be considered in the light of a committee of Parliament, or executive council to carry into effect the acts and resolutions of Parliament and administer affairs to the approval of Parliament.

Nations differ in their social and political circumstances, but in all free countries, at least, it is generally recognized that the elective assembly is of the first importance. The theory of the elective assembly, is that the whole people or such of the people as are duly qualified to vote shall be equally represented. It cannot be said that hitherto this object has been even approximately attained. Its attainment may indeed be impracticable, but the question is of so much importance that it cannot be unworthy of grave consideration. May we not ask if it be possible to devise some means, by which the whole people of the realm may be brought to a central point, to a focus so to speak, in a deliberate assembly or Parliament.

The question of electing representatives to

sit in Parliament has received the attention of many political writers and has likewise been investigated at length by many celebrated geometers, who have recorded their dissent from the practices followed. Under the present system, members are elected by a part of the community only, while their election is opposed by another part. It is quite true that the intention is to have the majority of the people represented, but even this is not a necessary result of the existing system; moreover it does not follow that the majority of members returned will hold the views and opinions of the majority of the people on any subject. It may happen and frequently does happen, as a direct result of the present system, that legislative power is placed, not in the representatives of a majority, but in those who represent a minority. Sir John Lubbock gives an apt illustration of this result. He supposes a country in which there are 1,200,000 electors who vote with party *A*, and 1,000,000 who vote with party *B*. Now if the two parties are evenly distributed over the whole country, it is clear that, under the ordinary system of representation, the weaker party will be utterly swamped. To use a familiar illustration (he remarks) whenever you drop a bucket into the sea, you will bring up salt water. In such a case therefore the 1,000,000 will be practically unrepresented. But we must carry the matter a little further. In the House so elected, let the majority bring forward some bill of an advanced character and carry it by two to one, i. e., by the votes of members representing 800,000 electors and against those representing 400,000; in such a case it is clear that the minority in the House would have with them also the 1,000,000 in the country who were left unrepresented; so that in fact the measure would represent the wishes of only 800,000 electors, and would be opposed by those of 1,400,000. Thus he points out that the result of a system "of Government by majorities, is, on the contrary, to enable a minority of 800,000 to over-rule a majority of 1,400,000."

This illustrates only one of the many defects in the present system, but it is quite sufficient to show that the principle of Representative Government, which is inherently good, has not been realised. It is obvious from the very nature of the system practised in electing

members, that, in every Parliament, not the whole but only a part of the electors are represented, and that the representatives of a minority may frequently over-rule a majority of the people.

Take the present Parliament of our own Dominion, and in doing so we have a case in which all will acknowledge that the Administration at the present moment is supported by a large working majority of members. At the last General Election (Feb. 1887) the total number of voters on the lists in all the constituencies where contests took place was 948,524. Of this number the votes polled for one party were 370,342 and for the other 354,714. That is to say, 39 per cent. of the whole represents one party, and 37 per cent. the other party in Parliament. As the representatives of the 37 per cent. are swamped in Parliament and are in no way recognized in the administration of affairs, it follows that 39 per cent. of the electors through their representatives have complete control, and the remaining 61 per cent. have practically no voice in the government of the country. Moreover, as the election of members representing the 39 per cent. of votes was in every instance opposed by the voters who number 37 per cent. of the whole, it follows that on all questions settled on strict party lines, Parliament speaks and acts in its decisions by the members who represent but two per cent. of the whole body of electors. This is not an accidental but a common and, indeed, a necessary result, of the present system, which must continue so long as we follow the ordinary method of electing members to sit in Parliament.

The question presented is this: Is there any means whatever by which a national assembly can be formed approximating more closely to the ideal Parliament?

Let us begin the inquiry by assuming that the electorate consists of only two electors, that they are equal in all respects, in ability, integrity, in worldly means, in public spirit; that they have each equal claims and equal desires to act as representatives, and each is equally willing to be represented the one by the other.

Under such circumstances what course would be followed by the two to settle the question? Would not the natural method be to cast lots? Assuming that the two electors

were left to their own resources, removed from all outside influences, would not this be the only rational means by which they could make a choice?

There are doubtless some minds who would have an innate feeling against resorting to such practice; the casting of lots being more or less associated with dice-playing, lotteries and games of chance, to which objections are taken on good and sufficient grounds; but in the case presented there remains no way of reaching a decision except by lot. What other course could be followed? A contest would not mend matters; a trial of physical strength and endurance would be at once futile and indefensible. If the object be to turn the two into a single representative unit, unanimity is essential, and while in agreeing in nothing else they could agree in casting lots. Is the principle of settlement by casting lots in itself objectionable? Was it not considered wise and good in ancient times? And would it not be equally good to-day? It is certainly a time-honored usage for determining difficult questions, and is exemplified in many passages in Holy Scripture; indeed the uniform voice of Scripture goes to show that decisions thus obtained are not only wholly unobjectionable in themselves, but that they were considered to have been overruled and directed by special providential interposition.

I shall cite but one example, the selection of an apostle to take the place of Judas Iscariot. An account of this election by casting lots is given in the "Acts of the Apostles," Chap. I, verses 15-26. It is stated that about a hundred and twenty persons were called upon to select one of their number. They proceeded with deliberate wisdom to follow a usage regarded by them as a means of obtaining the divine mind. They determined by lot who should be the twelfth apostle, and thus they made a selection to which a cheerful acquiescence was unanimously given.

I have assumed a case of two electors, and pointed out the course which might be followed—indeed, the only rational course which could be followed. If the principle laid down be sound, could it not be applied in other cases? Let us assume that the electorate consists of twenty voters, what could be done in this case? If individual voters in the electorate were equal in all respects, as in the first

case referred to, the question would be a very simple one, as it might be settled by casting lots for one of the twenty equally eligible persons. It may be taken for granted that under the circumstances no one would object to make the selection in this way, as being the simplest and best mode of making a choice. It would remove antagonism and promote unanimity; and, by the very act of casting lots, each one of the twenty taking part therein would be an assenting party to the choice made. Men as we ordinarily find them are, however, not alike; they differ much in their qualifications, and their opinions are not the same; we must therefore consider cases in which equal eligibility and uniformity of mind in the whole electorate is not the rule.

First, let us suppose that among the twenty electors, five votes favor the choice of *A*, another five *B*, another *C*, and the remainder *D*. We should thus have *A*, *B*, *C*, *D* each equally desired and preferred as the representative of the twenty.

$(A+B+C+D) \div 4$ would therefore be the representative unit of the whole. We cannot, however, take one quarter of *A*, *B*, *C*, and *D*, and combine these quarters so as to form one individual, but we can reduce the four to one by the principle of casting lots. One of the four can be selected by what may be termed the "Apostolic" method, and the person so selected would be recognized as chosen by the twenty electors as the common representative of the whole.

Secondly, let us suppose a case in which there is less diversity of opinion; two groups of five electors each favor *A*, one group of five prefer *B*, another *C*. The selected men would thus stand *A*, *A*, *B* and *C*, and the representative unit of the whole would be $(2A+B+C) \div 4$. As in the previous case, this complex would be reducible to a single individual by casting lots, and it is obvious that the probability of the lot falling upon *A*, would be as two to one.

Thirdly, suppose three groups of five electors desire to be represented by *A* and one group by *B*. In this case we should have $(3A+B) \div 4$, as the representative unit: in selecting one of by lot, there is a undoubtedly a possibility of the lot falling upon *B*, but the probability of *A*'s being chosen would be three times greater than the probability in *B*'s case. True it may be said that there should be no possi-

bility of *B*'s being chosen in a constituency where three-fourths of the electors desire *A*. We must, however, bear in mind that the object is not so much to have particular sections of the country, as to have the whole nation, fairly represented in Parliament. If we look a little further, if we take four constituencies precisely similar to the one under consideration, according to the mathematical theory of probabilities, there would be returned out of the four, three members in sympathy with *A* and one member in sympathy with *B*. Again, if we carry the matter still further if we take into consideration every one of the constituencies into which for convenience the whole nation may be divided, it would be found as a general result that the representatives returned to sit in Parliament would collectively represent the nation and fairly embody the reason contained in the whole community.

There is one peculiarity of the system suggested which may be noticed; in every case the election of a representative would be effected deliberately and without conflict. It would be accomplished in fact with unanimous assent. Each individual voter would contribute toward a common result—a result which would be reached on principles equally just and fair to all, and thus command general acquiescence.

These results are attainable only by bringing to bear, on matters of doubt or difficulty, the principle of settlement adopted by the Apostles. That principle cannot be objected to on scientific grounds, and those who hold the belief that mundane affairs are over-ruled and directed, should have no difficulty in accepting it as a means of promoting harmony and advancing the common good. The belief in a Providence, who takes cognizance of the affairs of men, is the foundation of all religion; communities therefore, the social fabric of which is based on Christianity, should have no hesitation in leaving matters of the highest moment to the arbitrament of an infinitely wise Providence rather than to the settlement of men with all their individual interests and selfish views, all their prejudices, all their passions, and all their errors of judgment.

I have so far, for the purpose of the argument, assumed hypothetical cases; it remains to be considered how the principles laid down

may be applied practically. Let us take for example the election of a single representative in a constituency of 2,000 voters. It is desirable in the first place that each voter, or group of voters of one mind, should have perfect freedom of choice in the nomination. Suppose, in order to accommodate every shade of opinion, it be arranged that each hundred voters of one way of thinking name the person whom they would wish to represent them. This would separate the constituency into twenty groups of voters, who would each nominate whomsoever they most favored. It does not necessarily follow that there would be twenty persons nominated in the constituency, as two or more groups might nominate the same person; a circumstance which would increase the probability of his selection exactly in proportion to the number of groups making him their nominee. On the twenty nominations being made, the next step would be for the person nominated to proceed on the principles above set forth, to select one of themselves.

If unable to make an unanimous choice, they might, as in the case of the twenty electors choosing a representative, sort themselves into smaller groups and, by the application of the principles set forth, proceed to reduce the number of voting units, and finally, by the apostolic method, determine the selection of one person. The person so chosen would be held to be the common choice of the whole 2,000 to represent the constituency in Parliament.

In the carrying out of such a system, there would be, as in every system, a number of possible contingencies for which provision would have to be made; these I have not deemed it necessary at present to enter into. My object has been briefly to suggest leading principles by which, as it appears to me, the central idea may be realized. If the principles submitted be sound, I venture to think that it is not impracticable to devise proper machinery to elect representatives who, when brought into one deliberative gathering, would, so far as such a thing is possible, be a mathematical concentration of the whole electoral body—would in fact constitute an assembly which would closely approximate to the ideal Parliament.

Referring to the present system an eminent writer asks: "Is government only possible by

the conflict of opposing principles?" The familiar expression, "government of the people by the people" cannot be held to mean government of the whole by a part or by the conflict of hostile parts. It must be obvious the united energy and wisdom of a whole nation directed towards one end can only be fully realized, when the supreme power is vested in a Parliament chosen by the whole people, and fairly representing the whole people. This is the great problem for solution and it is manifest that if such a Parliament is ever to be constituted, the people, in choosing members to represent them, must in some way be brought to act not in contestation and conflict, but in concert and in concord.

If it be one of the first of political desiderata to have no large minorities left unrepresented in the national assembly, it appears to me essential to seek for some means of securing the co-operation of the whole body of the electors in the election of members to sit in the High Court of Parliament. To obtain this result it is obviously expedient to adopt a system which necessarily does not develop animosity or provoke hostility; the aim should be to promote friendliness and agreement in a matter which concerns all alike. It cannot be denied that the whole community is concerned in having in Parliament, not men of extreme views, but moderate-minded men of good common sense and good conscience, capable of representing the more enlightened electoral mind. By electing representatives on the principles laid down, these desirable objects would undoubtedly in a large measure be attained; every step would be deliberately taken, free from the excited and heated feeling which so frequently accompany ordinary elections. In every stage of the proceedings there would be a tendency to return only the best men. At the very first step it is obvious that a candidate must be a person respected and supported by a hundred electors. It is presumable that no hundred electors of any class or race or creed would deliberately put forward a base or unworthy or even an inferior individual; it is not to be supposed that they would choose one of the least intelligent or least honest or least reputable amongst them as their representative in the candidature. As a rule, electors of one mind would arrange

themselves into groups of one hundred, and each group would select some man, who, on his merits as a citizen, would creditably represent them, or who as a statesman would commend himself to their favor. In their turn, those selected by the hundreds would follow the same course, selecting generally the best, the worthiest and wisest men until the final choice was reached and a member selected to represent the constituency in Parliament.

It can scarcely be doubted that if such a system could be put in force, the tendency would be upwards from first to last, and that there would be drawn to the legislature accomplished statesmen, men endowed with wisdom and patriotism, practical knowledge and experience. The inevitable effect would be to allay the spirit of faction and remove political rancour. In a higher degree than under the ordinary method of electing members, the system would attract within the pale of Parliament men in generous sympathy not with a part only, but with the whole people. Thus might be constituted an august body which as closely as possible would be a true mirror of the enlightened mind of the nation to reflect its opinions, its wisdom, and its virtues.

In a Parliament so constituted, perfect unanimity on all questions, perhaps on any question, is not to be looked for, and each separate question would have to be settled, as it arose, by the voice of a majority. Hence it may be said that as every question would in the end have to be determined by a majority, the Parliament as proposed would be no improvement on the present. It will, however, readily be seen that there is a wide difference between a parliament representing the whole people, deciding questions by a majority of its own members, and a Parliament in which a part only of the electors has any voice. The proposed assembly would not consist of men placed in their seats in direct opposition to a large number of the people, but a Parliament formed through the co-operation and assent of the whole body of the electors, to promote their common welfare; it would approximately be a microcosm, so to speak, of the the nation. In and through this Parliament each and every elector would have an equal voice in public affairs.

The proposal is to substitute in our Parlia-

mentary elections the principle of co-operation for the principle of antagonism, and by this means to choose representatives, who when brought together in a deliberative assembly would realize the true idea of Parliament—a “Witenagemot or great council of wise men,” representing every part of the realm, and imbued with the spirit of the whole, to act in the name of the whole, and speak the voice of the united nation.

If such a Parliament be an object to be desired; if it be a fundamental principle that all who bear the taxation should share in the representation; if it be the sacred right of every elector to have a just and proper representation in Parliament; then it must be recognized as a paramount duty, and an object worthy of the highest efforts of the progressive statesman, to find some means by which such a legislative body may be realized. A complete solution of the problem may be remote, but as has been stated, Parliament is a growth and development, and in all matters into which the principle of growth enters, the element of time must also enter. The question vitally concerns all free communities, and any change must in the nature of things be preceded by a deliberate and impartial enquiry. I have ventured to submit a scientific solution: it may not be the best means of attaining the desired end, and I offer it with all diffidence merely as a contribution to the general discussion, in the hope that it may not be wholly barren of utility. I cannot but think that if the strictly scientific habit of

mind be brought to bear on the question, some practical method of solving the problem will slowly and surely be evolved. Whatever the solution, I humbly think that it must be based on principles which will not beget the conflicts and contestations which result from political activity under the present system.

It is held by the most eminent political economists that by co-operating two men will do more work and do it better than four men, or four times four men acting in opposition. Is not the rule of universal application? Can there be co-operation without harmony? Can there be antagonism without discord? And are not discord and harmony in the state likened unto disease and health in the human body? This much will be conceded; the chronic feuds between tribes and races which characterized the history of the human family in a less advanced stage of civilization no longer exist. War is manifestly not the normal condition of society in our time. Is it not therefore an anachronism to perpetuate hostility in the internal affairs of a nation? Is it not in the highest interest of the state that each member of the community, in every matter which concerns him as a citizen, should have the fullest opportunity of acting up to the injunction, “Live peaceably with all men.” If the age of belligerency has passed away, is it not eminently fit and proper that we should seek the removal of the last vestiges of a belligerent age which still remain in our political system?



EXPLANATORY NOTE.

To the Editor Queen's College Journal :

If you append my Royal Society paper to the address I delivered on " University Day " I would desire to explain as follows :—

The object of my paper, " A problem in Political Science," was simply to demonstrate that Parliament could be formed so as to represent truly the whole nation.

I do not wish it to be thought that I have given the only solution to the problem. I merely wish it to be understood, that having established the possibility of constituting the national assembly with scientific accuracy, I felt warranted in urging that an effort should be made to abolish government by party and substitute government by the whole people.

I do not doubt that features open to objection in the solution presented in my Royal Society paper can be eliminated or that better means may be devised, of attaining the desired object. If a " will " become apparent in the public mind, a " way " will not be wanting.

SANDFORD FLEMING.

Ottawa, Oct. 20th, 1891.



